

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE VISITING OBSERVER PROCESS**

### *1. Who manages the Visiting Observer process?*

The Visiting Observer process is currently managed by the Privacy Assurance Office which is part of the Compliance Department.

### *2. How do I contact the Privacy Assurance Office about a Visiting Observer?*

The best way to contact the Privacy Assurance Office about a Visiting Observer is to send an email to this address:

[VisitingObserver@stanfordhealthcare.org](mailto:VisitingObserver@stanfordhealthcare.org)

### *3. Does the Privacy Assurance Office match potential Visiting Observers with hosts?*

No. The Privacy Assurance Office does not match Visiting Observers with hosts. A Visiting Observer must already have a hospital or physician sponsor that has agreed to serve as their host prior contacting our office.

### *4. Can vendors or pharmaceutical representatives participate in the Visiting Observer program?*

No. Vendors and pharmaceutical representatives are not eligible to participate in this program. All visits by these parties must be approved by Supply Chain. Please contact Rolando Pansoy for further guidance.

### *5. Who is eligible to participate in the Visiting Observer program?*

The following categories are generally allowed under the Visiting Observer policy:

- International Physicians interested in observing procedures

- International Professionals interested in observing procedures for educational purposes
- Domestic physicians or healthcare professionals interested in observing care
- Healthcare Professionals interested in observing for educational purposes
- Medical Students currently enrolled in a non-Stanford medical school that are interested in observing care (this excludes medical students here for training related to a clerkship or externship)
- Students from Stanford or another domestic University
- High School Students that are age 18 or over

6. *Is there an age requirement for the Visiting Observer program?*

Yes. Visiting Observers must be at least 18 years of age.

7. *What other department are involved in the Visiting Observer process?*

Although the Privacy Office provides the initial, required approval for Visiting Observers, other departments are involved in the process. For example, Occupational Health Services must provide a medical clearance for all Visiting Observers, SHC/SCH Security Services are involved in the badging process, and the management of the individual operating rooms make the final decisions about observations that occur in these areas.

8. *How does the Visiting Observer obtain medical clearance?*

Occupational Health Services will be able to assist you with any questions related to this matter. Occupational Health can be reached at 650-721-4220.

9. *What is a Visiting Observer allowed to do during the observation?*

Visiting Observers, under the supervision of their host, can observe patient care, procedures, or the use of special equipment at SHC or SCH. Visiting Observers cannot participate in patient care, conduct any administrative work, access any protected health information, or use any of the information that he or she is exposed to for research purposes. Visiting Observers cannot take any pictures, audios, or recordings of patients.

*10. Can the Visiting Observer obtain class or educational credit for the observation?*

No. The Privacy Assurance Office cannot approve class or education credits. If a potential Visiting Observer is seeking any type of class credit, they will not be eligible for this program. The Privacy Assurance Office will do our best to refer them to another department or Stanford University for further assistance.

*11. What if the Visiting Observer wants clinical or hands-on experience?*

The Visiting Observer program administered by the Privacy Assurance Office is only for individuals that want to observe. The program cannot accommodate those that want clinical or hands-on experience. The individual may be more interested in an internship, employment, or volunteer opportunities. They should contact Human Resources or Volunteer Services about these opportunities.

*12. Can the Visiting Observer use information obtained during their observation for research? What about for media purposes or publication?*

Absent an approved Stanford IRB, information obtained during the observation cannot be used for research purposes. Visiting Observers are not allowed to use any information obtained during their observation for media purposes or publications. This includes any academic or scientific publications.

*13. Why are patient authorizations required for Visiting Observers to observe patient care? When does the host obtain the patient authorization?*

Visiting Observers are not involved in the treatment of the patient; therefore, patients must be notified of their role and provide their written authorization for the observer to hear their health information and observe their care. This is required to comply with the federal laws, such as HIPAA.

The host must obtain the patient's authorization prior to the Visiting Observer being in the patient's presence. For example, the host should enter the exam room first to request and obtain the patient's authorization prior to the

Visiting Observer entering the space. The patient's authorization can be obtained the same day of the observation or prior to the observation.

*14. Who can sign the patient authorization?*

The patient authorization must be signed by the patient or their legal representative. Any questions related to patient authorizations can be directed to the Privacy Assurance Office at 650-724-2572.

*15. What does the host do with the completed patient authorizations?*

The host must retain the document for six years. Please contact the Privacy Assurance Office with any questions.

*16. If the patient or their legal representative is not present to sign the patient authorization or declines to give their permission, can the host still share patient information about the patient with the Visiting Observer?*

No, under these circumstances, the host cannot share any patient information with the Visiting Observer.

*17. Why does the Visiting Observer have to complete Patient Privacy and Code of Conduct Training?*

Visiting Observers are exposed to patient information during their visit; therefore, Stanford is required to provide training on patient privacy.

The SHC/ SCH Code of Conduct is the keystone our corporate integrity philosophy and it is a vital part of how we achieve our mission and values. It is important that Visiting Observers understand this commitment while they are participating in this program.

*18. Will Stanford accept HIPAA or Patient Privacy training that was completed at another institution?*

No, Stanford will not accept training completed at another institution. All Visiting Observers are required to take Stanford approved patient privacy training.

*19. Why does the host have to retain the required documents for six years?*

The required documentation must be maintained for six years to comply with regulatory requirements under HIPAA and Joint Commission.

*20. How long can an observation last?*

As a general rule, a visiting observer cannot observe more than 30 calendar days in a 12-month period. Decisions to exceed that time frame are made on a case by case basis.

*21. Can a Visiting Observer observe in the Operating Room or Emergency Department?*

The Privacy Assurance Office completes the initial evaluation of Visiting Observer requests. After the visit is approved by the Privacy Assurance Office, it is the host's responsibility to contact the specific Operating Room to see if the Visiting Observer can be accommodated

The Privacy Assurance Office will not approve any Visiting Observer request to observe in the Emergency Department or inpatient Psychiatry Unit. The concerns for patient care and safety in the Department outweigh the benefits of allowing Visiting Observers in the area.

*22. How far in advance should I contact the Privacy Assurance Office about a potential Visiting Observer?*

It is recommended that you initiate contact with the Privacy Assurance Office at least 14 business days prior to the first observation day. If you plan to host an international observer, you should allow more time for processing.

*23. What documents in the packet must be completed and returned to the Privacy Assurance Office before the visit begins?*

The host must return the Visiting Observer Attestation and Confidentiality Agreement and Host Attestation for Visiting Observer to the Privacy Assurance Office before the visit begins.

*24. Is there a document that serves as proof that a Visiting Observer was approved by the Privacy Assurance Office?*

Yes, the Host Attestation once completed by both the host and Privacy Assurance representative serves as proof that the Visiting Observer is approved.

*25. Where can I find the most up to date information on the Visiting Observer process?*

The most up to date information is located on the Compliance Department website under the Visiting Observer tab.